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European and World Day against the Death Penalty, 10 October 2012
Joint Declaration by Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Strasbourg, 10.10.2012 - Capital punishment is inhumane and unnecessary. Experience has also shown that it does not serve as a deterrent to crime. No legal system is flawless; any miscarriage of justice could lead to the tragic loss of an innocent life.

Abolition of the death penalty throughout Europe, and beyond, is an objective common to all our member states (*). No execution has taken place in our member states in the last fifteen years.

The European Union and the Council of Europe encourage all European States which have not yet abolished the death penalty *de jure* under all circumstances, to do so by ratifying the relevant protocols to the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Council of Europe and the European Union urge Belarus, the only European country which still executes people, to introduce a moratorium with a view to complete abolition.

We welcome the abolitionist trend worldwide, and note the ever decreasing number of countries applying capital punishment. On the other hand, we are concerned about the sharp increase in executions during the past twelve months in some of those countries which still apply and implement the death penalty.

The European Union and the Council of Europe urge all countries which still retain the death penalty to immediately apply a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition. Moreover, we call on all countries to support the Resolution on a global moratorium on the use of the death penalty, which will be put to a vote at the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly in December 2012.

The Council of Europe and the European Union reaffirm their commitment to continue their persistent efforts to promote abolition in Europe and throughout the world."

(*) The Council of Europe counts 47 member states, which include all 27 member states of the European Union.